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Mayflower

Mayflower barn

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Some years ago Mrs. Dorothy Thomson sent me considerable information concerning beams from the famous Pilgrim craft Mayflower as they relate to Old Jordans Hostel, the Meeting House, and the barn at the Quaker Village in Buckinghamshire, England.

As far back as the time of Charles II a few Quakers met at Jordans Farm, the home of William Russell, one of the first in that area to become a convinced Friend.

All nonconformists were being persecuted; but the Quakers suffered more than most, as they refused on principle to pay tithes, remove their hats in a court of law, or take an oath.

Many were fined to the point of ruin, and others spent years in and out of jail, but they resolved that no one could close their meetings.

In 1687 the Friends obtained a license to build a Meeting House and work was started that summer. The first meeting for worship was held within its walls on First Day, Sunday, Sept. 30, 1688.

The old building has mellowed but is little changed. A ministers' gallery, consisting of raised seats under a large end window, was added about 1733.

The paneling dates from the earliest days and although the windows have been rebuilt, some of the original glass remains. Much of the brick flooring is as the workmen laid it, and a few of the benches were in use in the 16th Century.

Jordans Meeting House was visited by many notables during the early days, but as the older Friends died and the younger ones moved away, the meetings finally ceased at the end of the 18th Century, and the Meeting House was opened only for occasional visits for more than a century. Now, however, it is in regular use.

The ancient barn, on property adjoining the Hostel land, is said to have been built, according to local tradition, from the timbers of the Mayflower.

It may be regarded as certain that the structure consists of ship's timbers of considerable age. As the owner of the farm which is now Old Jordans Hostel was a friend of the proprietor of the Mayflower, it is thought that he may have purchased the hulk when its sea-going days were over and made use of its timbers for the erection of the barn.

Some of the material may have found its way into the farmhouse, where to this day can be seen an ancient door with cross-pieces bearing a conventional floral design, perhaps the May or Maryflower of the vessel's name.



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